



VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974

Mission Statement

War causes wounds and suffering that last beyond the battlefield.

Our mission is to heal the wounds, to restore dignity, hope and self-sufficiency to all veterans in need, and to significantly reduce homelessness and poverty among veterans.



Swords History

Founded in 1974, Swords to Plowshares is a community-based not-for-profit organization that provides counseling and case management, employment and training, housing, and legal assistance to veterans in the San Francisco Bay Area. We promote and protect the rights of veterans through advocacy, public education and partnerships with local, state and national entities.

Peer to Peer Counseling

Swords to plowshares was founded on the premise of vets helping veterans and that tradition continues to this day. Our organizational staffing is 75% veterans. Many of our staff are recovering from the wounds of war themselves.

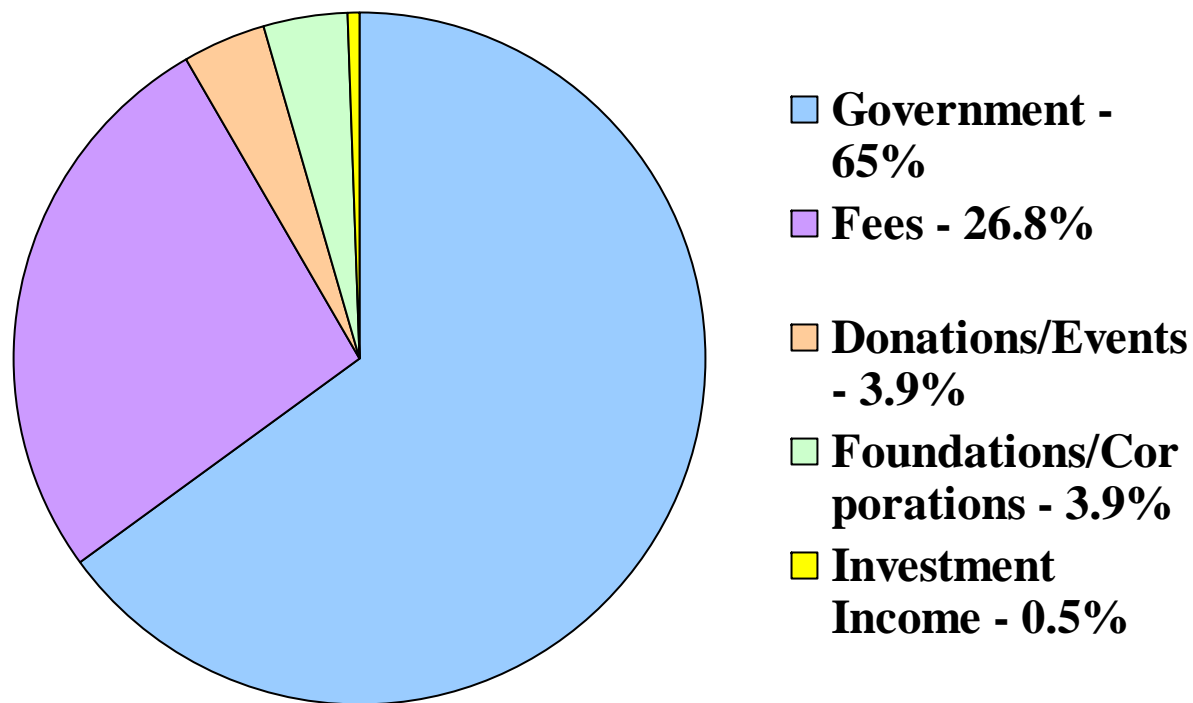
Who Swords serves

- We work with any veteran who comes through our doors, irregardless of their character of discharge or length of service. Many organizations, including the VA, will not provide certain services to veterans with a less than honorable discharge status. Those veterans with a dishonorable discharge cannot access the VA's services.

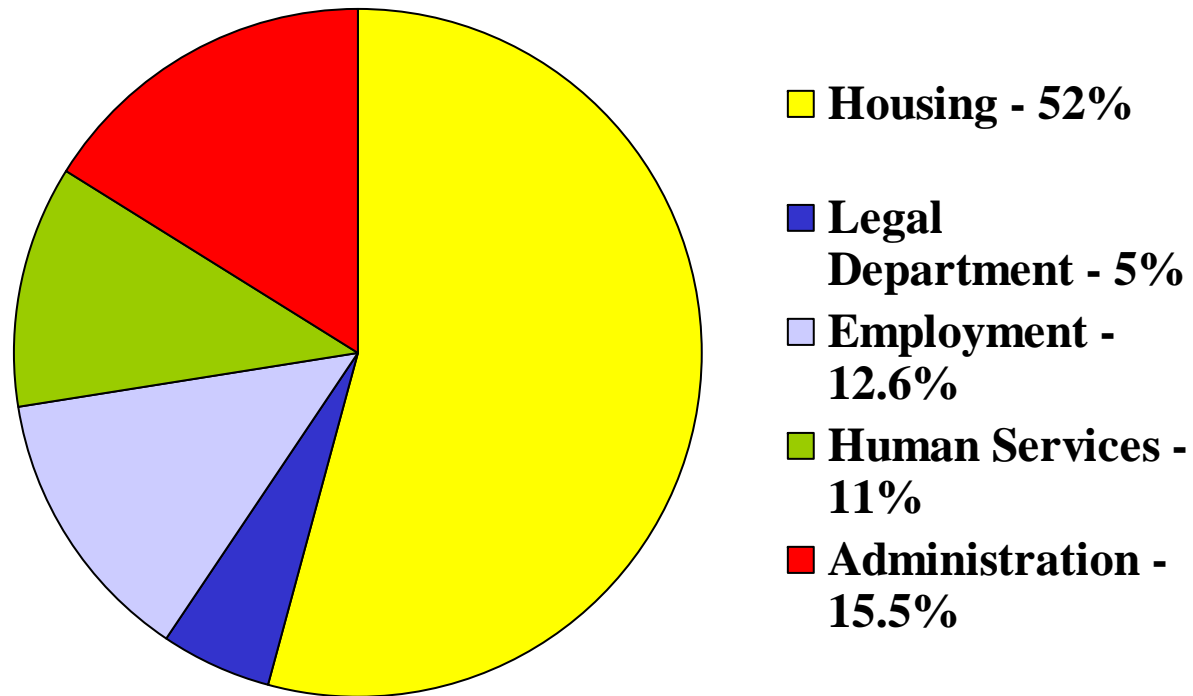
How to clients are referred to Swords to Plowshares

- Our clients come to us from many referral sources including: other service providers, jails, Project Homeless Connect, and the VA to name a few. But our primary referents are the vets themselves. A vet in need will generally seek out another vet. We are truly honored when one vet tells another about the services that we provide.

Our Funding Base



Uses of Funds



Our Services

Swords has five main areas of services for clients:

- Health and Human Services
- Employment and Training
- Legal Services
- Housing
- Substance Abuse Services

Health and Human Services

- Swords to Plowshares' drop-in center provides mental health services, including counseling for drug and alcohol problems and post-traumatic stress disorders, case management and referrals. Our outreach and prevention programs target veterans who suffer from unemployment, poverty, medical problems, substance abuse, and social isolation. Last year alone, Swords to Plowshares' Health and Social Services Unit served more than 1,000 veterans in need. Financial assistance was provided to 206 veterans who were homeless or at-risk for homelessness so they could move into or maintain permanent affordable housing.
- In 2004 Swords to Plowshares' Health and Social Services Unit was one of six programs - and the only veteran-specific one - across the nation to be honored by the US Department of Health and Human Services for excellence in providing care to homeless people with mental illness or substance abuse disorders.

Employment and Training

- For more than 30 years, Swords to Plowshares has been the principal provider of employment services to homeless and low-income veterans in San Francisco. The Employment & Training Services Unit is committed to helping unemployed veterans secure stable jobs with livable wages that meet the individual's needs and move them toward self-sufficiency. Swords to Plowshares helps veterans make the transition to gainful employment by offering vocational counseling, life-skills training, resume preparation and job referrals.
- Last year alone, Swords to Plowshares' Employment & Training Unit helped 300 veterans improve their skills through employment-related activities, including job counseling, soft skills workshops and classroom training. A recent study shows that Swords to Plowshares ranks among the most effective veteran-based programs in California for helping veterans find well-paying hourly jobs.

Legal Department

Many of our country's veterans never receive the benefits they deserve. A Civil War-era law prohibits them from paying attorneys to represent them before the federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in most instances. Swords to Plowshares is one of the few organizations in the country that cuts through the red tape by providing *free* attorney representation, case management, and advocacy to indigent veterans seeking benefits.

Legal Department, Continued

- Swords to Plowshares played a leading role in helping veterans who suffered disability from exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War. Now Swords to Plowshares is assisting veterans who were exposed to various toxins during the Persian Gulf War and other armed conflicts since the Gulf War. Approximately 400,000 US military personnel were potentially exposed to more than 630,000 pounds of Depleted Uranium dust and fragments on Gulf War battlefields. Swords to Plowshares has been at the forefront in educating the public about the widespread harm caused by the military's use of radioactive and toxic materials in the Persian Gulf.

Legal, the numbers

- Swords' attorneys represent more than 100 veterans in ongoing matters at any point in time and provide brief advice to more than 200 others each year.
- Swords provides these services to any veteran, regardless of their discharge status
- In 2003, 56 veterans who received free legal representation from Swords to Plowshares' attorneys collectively won \$1,647,306 in retroactive financial benefits (lump sum awards) from the VA. The average award was \$29,416.

Housing



- Swords to Plowshares offers transitional and permanent housing, regular meals, as well as intensive group and individual counseling
- Swords provides permanent and transitional shelter to 223 once-homeless veterans at any given time.
- Swords operates two group homes in the Balboa District near City College of San Francisco, a two-year transitional housing facility on Treasure Island, and the Veterans Academy in the Presidio.

Housing Success Rates

- Among the 50 once-homeless veterans who completed our Transitional Supportive Housing Program at Treasure Island last year, 96% increased their income and 100% moved into housing (a condition for completing the program). The average stay was 11 months. At the Veterans Academy, San Francisco's only permanent supportive housing program for homeless and disabled veterans, 71% have increased their incomes and 80 improved their skills through the Computer Learning Center.

Substance Abuse Services

Swords to Plowshares Transitional Housing Program is a highly services-enriched environment designed to meet the needs of veterans with significant barriers to self sufficiency. Issues of substance abuse/dependence and chronic mental health issues are treated through education, individual and group counseling, relapse prevention, vet to vet peer-led support groups, and the monitoring of pharmacological treatment through partnership with the Dept of Veteran Affairs Medical Center. The 90-bed program includes 20 beds set aside for chronically mentally ill veterans with qualify Axis I diagnosis. We also offer specialized approaches for meeting the needs of chronically homeless veterans and female veterans.

Iraq Veteran Project

Preparing for the newest generation of veterans

- Swords to Plowshares Iraq Veteran Project (IVP) is conducting a broad-based investigation of the needs of new combat veterans and the availability of effective services. Issues areas of inquiry include PTSD, physical disabilities, employment readiness, family stability, and access to housing, social services and veteran's benefits. IVP findings will be used to improve the services of Swords to Plowshares and other community-based veterans' rights organizations and to promote public policy which may prevent unnecessary suffering of new veterans.
- In addition, the Swords to Plowshares' Iraq Veteran Project is building our network veterans' organizations to share information and support improved services for OIF/OEF veterans and their predecessors. For more information or to share and exchange information, please call 415-252-4787 ext. 356.



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